

Regional Planning

by
Hans Blumenfeld

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Planning the Canadian Environment

L. O. Gertler, Editor

PLANNING THE CANADIAN ENVIRONMENT

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CONTENTS

Introduction, <i>L.O. Gertler</i>	11
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THE EVOLUTION OF PLANNING IN CANADA

Thomas Adams and the Commission of Conservation, <i>Alan H. Armstrong</i>	17
The "Patron Saint" of Town Planning in British Columbia, <i>H. Peter Oberlander</i>	36
The Origin of Colonial Settlements in the Maritimes, <i>Michael Hugo-Brunt</i>	42
Some Economic and Social Influences on Regional Planning in Alberta, <i>Leonard O. Gertler</i>	84

THE BACKGROUND IDEAS

The Fundamental Aims of Planning, <i>A. Benjamin Handler</i>	95
Suburbs: Myth and Reality, <i>André Saumier</i>	105
Planners' Concert, <i>Humphrey S.M. Carver</i>	109

LAND, AS RESOURCE AND SPACE

"Resources for Tomorrow", The Background Papers, <i>John Dakin</i>	119
Resource Planning at the Federal Level, <i>J.L. Jenness</i>	137
Recreation Area Planning: Some Physical and Ecological Requirements, <i>Eugene Mattyasovsky</i>	148
Land Speculation: Its Effects and Control, <i>R.W.G. Bryant</i>	168

DEVELOPING AND PLANNING THE REGIONS OF CANADA

Observations on Canadian Cities, 1960-61, <i>E.T. Rashleigh</i>	185 ✓
Flemingdon Park, A New Urban Community, <i>Macklin L. Hancock</i>	205
Neighbourhood Planning in Toronto, <i>M.B.M. Lawson</i>	229
Metropolitan Man, Some Economic and Social Aspects, <i>Murray Jones</i>	235
Fort Saskatchewan: An Industrial Satellite of Edmonton, <i>P.J. Smith</i>	250 ✓

PERSPECTIVES FOR REGIONAL PLANNING

A Tale of Two Cities, <i>Nigel H. Richardson</i>	269
Regional Planning, <i>Hans Blumenfeld</i>	285
International Trends in Urban and Regional Planning, <i>Ralph M. Rookwood</i>	289
Planning of the Metropolitan Region, <i>Gordon Stephenson</i>	306

INTRODUCTION

The papers presented in this volume are selections from the first five years of *PLAN, Canada*, the journal of the Town Planning Institute of Canada. Spanning a period from the end of 1959 to the first quarter of 1965, they have been chosen for the way they illuminate the evolution of planning in Canada.

The publication of a book on this theme has its justification for purely historical reasons as an exposure of the thought of Canadian planners during a period of intense activity in urban and regional development. And it fills a need to make accessible to the teacher, the student and the man of affairs, a treatment of planning issues in terms of Canadian experience—not to assuage parochial feelings, but for the greater relevance of the material to the man or woman struggling for a better environment, or studying about it, in Halifax, Montreal or Vancouver.

Important as these things are, there is still another and more fundamental reason for this book. And that is to highlight by selection and juxtaposition of these works the particularly Canadian contribution to urban and regional planning in the Western World. Those of us, like myself, who have a partisan view on this issue, must confess to a concern about the gap between achievement and assertion. We have generally not matched in the realm of scholarship what we have done in the realm of action. This book is, in a sense, the beginning of an exegesis. It will to a degree serve the purpose of showing what Canadian planning has accomplished, of explaining its particular character and flavour, and suggesting something of its potential.

The significance of this exposition will, of course, depend on the reader's view of the pluses in Canadian planning experience. These may be counted as the establishment of a legal framework for planning in the provinces (Armstrong); making metropolitan planning operational in a large urbanized complex (Jones); establishing within one provincial jurisdiction a system of regional planning on a multi-municipal base, with executive and not just advisory powers (Gertler); building citizen participation into the planning process of a metropolis (Lawson); designing in a comprehensive and integrated fashion an entire new section of a city, with innovations in the forms of multiple housing and in the ways of coping with the automobile (Hancock); applying and elaborating the technique of new town building both for a resource-based town on the frontier (Richardson), and for an industrial satellite in a dynamic western park belt region (Smith); and undertaking a national evaluation of the use and abuse of renewable resources, opening the way to an inter-disciplinary and regional approach to the study and solution of resource problems (Dakin).

Some of the clues to the Canadian planning riddle are found in this book. I will refer, by way of illustration, to only a few of these. In the beginning there was Thomas Adams, who knew and was inspired by Patrick Geddes and Ebenezer Howard—whose career included participation in the British Garden City movement at the turn of the century, the direction of the Regional Plan for New York and its Environs, from 1923 to 1930,

The special relevance of TVA lies in the fact that the utilization of a resource was regarded not as an end in itself but as a vehicle for the economic and social enrichment of an entire region, and that this enrichment took many forms and was effected in many ways—direct action by the federal government being the exception rather than the rule. TVA's way was to educate, to demonstrate, to assist, to encourage, not to step in and do the job itself, beyond its immediate statutory task of harnessing the Tennessee River for power production, navigation and flood control; but it did these things to such good effect that a poor and primitive region achieved prosperity and vitality.

From all these—from present Canadian regional planning and special local administration legislation, from PFRA, ARDA and APEC, from the British New Towns and the American TVA there are valuable lessons to be learned, and it is to be hoped that they will be noted and applied. For the experience of Prince Rupert and Kitimat shows unmistakably that good town planning under the aegis of private firms is not enough. Each of the two towns is a fine example of the best town planning thought and skill of its day, and the differences in approach, planning and execution provide a fair measure of the progress that has been made in this field in half a century. But in origin and concept, in the kind of consideration that led to and conditioned the establishment of the two communities, there was no significant change at all. In each case the first consideration was economic exploitation, not the creation of a good environment for living or the future well-being of a region. It is here that progress in thinking is long overdue; it must be understood that the use of the resources of the north means the building of new human communities, urban and regional; that the creation of such communities demands an enlightened and comprehensive economic development and regional planning policy; and that this in turn requires a large measure of public participation, public initiative and public responsibility.

While the manner in which these responsibilities could best be exercised is obviously a matter for careful and expert study, the requirements of the job as well as experience both in Canada and elsewhere indicate the need for some special form of regional planning and development agency, adequately financed and with the authority and capacity to undertake a variety of functions, including resource surveys, provision of roads, harbours, airports and other elements of the economic "substructure", industrial promotion and investment, town planning and building, and perhaps also local administration. There is no exact model to be slavishly followed in meeting the special conditions of the Canadian north, but there are many examples to learn from, not only those already mentioned but others in many parts of the world. By such means, not only could the resources of the north be brought into use more rapidly and more efficiently, but settlement and urban development could take place in a stable and orderly fashion to the lasting benefit of the people. In the final analysis, that is what really matters.

REGIONAL PLANNING

Hans Blumenfeld

The author's concept of regional planning is a distillation of a rich and diversified planning career in the United States, Canada, Russia, Germany and intermittently, Puerto Rico, Israel, and other developing countries. His work has been focused in Canada since 1955 when he became the Assistant Director of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board. His present activities include consulting work both in Toronto and Montreal and lecturing in the Department of Town and Regional Planning, University of Toronto. He is the author of the recently published book, The Modern Metropolis, Harvest House, Montreal. In 1966 Dr. Blumenfeld was elected a Fellow of the Town Planning Institute of Canada. In the spring of 1968 he received an LL.D. from the University of Montreal.

Regional planning is the extension of planning into a new field. Like all planning it means exploring interaction and attempting to order all actions so that they will help rather than hinder each other.

This new field has been approached simultaneously from two directions, both of which have gradually enlarged their scope; on the one side from local, physical planning; and on the other, from segmental or departmental, functional, planning. It lies in the nature of planning as a discipline concerned with interrelations that it must constantly expand its field of study and of action, as it discovers ever wider and more complex interrelations and attempts to influence them. But in addition to this "subjective" reason for the expansion of planning into new fields there is an even more important "objective" one, deriving from the nature of contemporary society.

It is commonplace that the world is getting smaller. With the development of means of transportation and communication local isolation is being broken and what was once an unrelated event in a distant area now becomes part of the locality's own life. But it is equally true to say that the world is becoming bigger. There are three times as many people living on this globe than there were 200 years ago and they engage in more varied activities and transform the face of the earth more strongly than any previous generation. Ever new skeins are woven into the increasingly complex tapestry of life.

Because the world is getting smaller, town planning, the core of the work of the members of our Institute^{*}, is forced to extend beyond the boundaries of the individual community to encompass its surroundings and its relation to neighbouring communities, leading to comprehensive planning primarily of metropolitan areas but beyond that also of larger and more loosely connected regions.

Because the world is getting bigger, populated by more people making more claims on its resources, functional planning, the planning of the activities of an industry or of a government department, is forced to take into account other activities going on in the same area, on which it is dependent and which may compete with it for land, water or other resources. Out of the attempt to co-ordinate all functions within a given area has been born another type of regional planning, which on this continent is best represented by the planning activities of the Tennessee Valley Authority or of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Functional planning and physical planning have developed as two different disciplines; but, as far as I know, only one western language, Russian, has developed two different terms; *planirovaniye*, regarded as a branch of economics, for the former, and *planirovka*, regarded as a branch of architecture, for the latter. They answer different, though related, questions.

Functional, economic, planning asks: what to produce, how much, at what cost, when? and only in very general terms: where?

Local physical, planning deals, from the economist's point of view, with one scarce resource, land. It asks primarily: where and how? However, it has increasingly turned to a study of the economic and social aspects of planning; by scheduling and "phasing" it attempts to answer the question "when?" and by capital budgeting the question "at what cost?"

On the other hand, functional planning, with increasing competition for land, has to deal very specifically with the question "where?" and with an increasing complex technology, it must be able to answer the question "how?"

Thus the two types of planning converge and merge into a new discipline which we call regional planning. Our French colleagues who use the term *urbanisme* for town planning have coined the term *aménagement du territoire* for this discipline.

I will not attempt to touch that sacred cow, the definition of planning—the poor beast has been milked pretty dry anyhow—but I can not quite avoid talking about the definition of a region for planning.

The term "region" has long been used by geographers to denote homogeneous areas such as the Laurentian Shield or the Wheat Belt. It seems to me that for a planning region homogeneity is not a suitable criterion. Planning is concerned with interaction and interaction occurs between heterogeneous elements which supplement each other rather than between homoge-

neous ones. It is often stated—frequently in exaggerated form—that any planning unit should be relatively "self-contained". The more homogenous an area, the more it is dependent on supplementary activities in other areas, and is consequently less self-contained. Therefore, heterogeneity, rather than homogeneity, is characteristic of a planning region. I would define such a region as an area within which interaction is more intense than is its interaction with other areas.

From this concept follow two important considerations. As interaction is impeded or facilitated not only by natural, but also by man-made factors, planning regions are defined not merely or exclusively by natural boundaries, but equally by political or administrative boundaries; most strongly, of course, by national borders, but to some extent by any administrative division. Therefore, the act of defining an area as suitable for planning administration does to some extent determine a region, not merely discover one.

However, the greatest care should be taken to discover where interaction is most developed and where it falls off. Thus the concept of the planning region as an area of intensive interaction leads to the concept of the "watershed". Various methods have been developed to find the boundaries separating neighbouring "watersheds". The German geographer Walter Christaller in his pioneering work on "the central places in Southern Germany" used the number of long-distance telephone calls made from any given location to one or another "central place". Newspaper distribution, wholesale trade in various commodities, and many other activities can be used to find boundary lines. No two lines will ever coincide completely. There is no such thing as an ideal boundary for a planning region. Which ever one is adopted will be a not wholly adequate compromise with conflicting existing conditions; but the fact of its adoption adds a new condition which makes it more adequate.

The problems dealt with by regional planning may vary widely, but at their core will be generally the use of land and of water and the development of transportation facilities; and these in turn very largely determine the distribution of economic activities.

Two different questions arise in this connection: distribution between regions and distribution within a region. Planning for the former is undertaken mainly by large corporations or by national governments; but distribution within a planning region can be guided by provincial and various levels of municipal governments, dependent on the size of the region.

Perhaps more important than difference in size is the difference between "monocentric" and "polycentric" regions. Intensive interaction has in most cases developed from an urban centre which has thereby transformed the surrounding area into its own region. In particular in modern industrial society the metropolitan region is becoming the dominant form of human settlement.

However, there are some areas which are characterized by the existence of several centres in close proximity to each other. Probably the most im-

* Town Planning Institute of Canada.

portant of these is the Ruhr region in Germany. But in Canada, the industrial towns of the Grand River Valley form a comparable constellation, though, of course, with a much smaller volume of population and economic activity.

In monocentric regions much of the drive for regional planning is likely to come from the central city; but in polycentric regions it will generally have to be initiated by a larger unit. In any case, regional planning requires active participation by non-governmental agencies, because so many of the crucial decisions are actually made by private enterprise. In this connection the German *Landesplanung-Verbaende* (Regional Planning Associations) are worthy of study. Their membership comprises provincial and municipal governments as well as representatives of the utilities, of industry, agriculture, trade unions, etc.

While active participation of such non-governmental bodies is essential, it appears that under our Canadian conditions the initiative for defining regions and organizing planning bodies within them must rest with the provinces. The time is ripe for regional planning. To assist in its development is a challenging task for the Town Planning Institute of Canada and all its members.

INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Ralph M. Rookwood

A native of Edmonton and now in the United Kingdom, Mr. Rookwood is a former Director of Town and Rural Planning for the Province of Alberta. He is at present chief planner of the Covent Garden redevelopment scheme in London, England. Events since the writing of this paper almost ten years ago have not diminished the impact of the central theme—"We are faced inevitably and unavoidably with the greatest era of city-building in the history of man."

Current problems are so pressing and our resources in the planning field are still so limited that we are all ordinarily obliged to focus on a relatively narrow field of interest in order to crystallize decisions and generate effective action. When we have time to think about it, we all acknowledge the dangers of limiting our outlook to this extent, however necessary it may be for the achievement of immediate objectives. We as planners least of all want to be caught winning the last war instead of preparing for the next one. But ordinarily we cannot avoid our daily preoccupations. A major advantage of our annual Town Planning Institute Conference is that we can remove our self-imposed blinkers to have a look at the broader scene and broader issues. With the choice of International Trends in Urban and Regional Planning as a subject, no one can accuse the conference organizers this year of neglecting their opportunities.

The subject is an important one because it may help us to clarify issues and concepts, and because as planners we cannot avoid the consequences of growing world integration and interdependence. There are broad trends in the development of the world as a whole that will ultimately (often in the near future) affect our work at its very foundations, although these trends may be temporarily obscured by impermanent local conditions. Local grain surpluses obscure growing world food shortages. Local wide-open spaces obscure the significance of growing population pressures. Current terms of trade in world markets may obscure a potential shift in favour of food and raw materials with all the implications this would have for Canada as a major world producer of both—implications of fundamental importance for future town design and the planning of the physical environment in general.

It is the purpose of this paper first, to discuss some of the most important of these trends affecting the physical development of the world,